

Appl. No. 10/022,016
Amendment After Final filed March 30, 2004
Reply to Office Action Mailed December 30, 2003

AMENDMENTS

IN THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A package for articles comprising a container having an internal space for containing the articles, the container comprising:
a container body comprising a first side body panel, a second side body panel opposite the first side body panel and a separation member disposed between the first and the second side body panels for dividing the internal space of the container body into first and second compartments, the first compartment having a first opening defined by a first edge of the container body, the second compartment having a second opening defined by a second edge of the container body;
first and second sealing layers removably affixed to the first and second edges of the container body for sealing the articles in the first and second compartments, wherein the internal space of the container is at a pressure less than atmospheric; and
a first lid hingedly attached to the first side body panel and a second lid hingedly attached to the second side body panel such that the first and second lids are attached to the container at substantially diametrically opposed attachment points, and wherein the first and second lids cover the first and second openings of the first and second compartments.
2. (Original) The package of claim 1, wherein the articles are cigarettes, a first brand or type of cigarette being contained in the first compartment and a second brand or type of cigarette different from the first brand or type of cigarette being contained in the second compartment.
3. (Original) The package of claim 1, wherein the first and second sealing layers are made of a low permeability sheet material and are adhesively affixed to the first and second edges of the container body.

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4. (Original) The package of claim 3, wherein the first and second sealing layers comprise one of a metal foil, a polymeric laminate, a coextruded polymeric film, a metal foil/polymeric film laminate, a paper/metal foil laminate and a paper/polymeric film laminate.

5. (Original) The package of claim 1, wherein the body comprises further separation members for dividing the internal space of the container body into at least three compartments.

6. (Previously Presented) The package of claim 1, wherein the container is rectangularly shaped, the body panels of the container body further comprising front and back body panels.

7. (Previously Presented) The package of claim 6, wherein the body panels and the separation member are integrally molded in one piece of a polymeric material.

8. (Original) The package of claim 1, wherein the separation member comprises a planar member formed integrally with the body panels, the planar member having opposite surfaces each forming a bottom surface of a respective compartment and including a plurality of parallel protrusions formed on the bottom surface of each compartment.

9. (Original) The package of claim 8, wherein the plurality of protrusions comprise one of continuous ridges, interrupted ridges, bell-shaped projections and semi-circular troughs.

10. (Original) The package of claim 1, wherein the first and second lids are attached to the container body by first and second hinges connected between the lids and the container body.

11. (Original) The package of claim 10, wherein the first and second hinges comprise straps of a flexible sheet material adhesively affixed to the container

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body and a respective first and second lid, the flexible sheet material comprising an adhesive-backed metal or polymeric foil.

12. (Original) The package of claim 1, wherein the first and second lids are attached to the container body by first and second hinges connected between the lids and the container body, the first and second hinges being disposed on opposite sides of the container body and having parallel hinge axes.

13. (Previously Presented) The package of claim 1, wherein the first and second lids each have peripheral flanges with edges and the container body has first and second peripheral shoulders on an outer surface thereof such that when the first and second lids are in the closed position, the edges of a respective flange abut a respective first and second peripheral shoulder so as to provide a smooth junction between the lids and the container body.

14. (Original) The package of claim 12, wherein the first and second lids are made of a metal material

15. (Original) The package of claim 7, wherein the polymeric material is an injection-moldable polymeric material selected from the group consisting of polypropylene, polyethylene terephthalate and polyethylene vinyl alcohol.

16. (Original) The package of claim 13, including a cutout in each of the first and second peripheral shoulders for exposing the edge of a respective lid flange and facilitating opening of a respective first and second lid.

17. (Original) The package of claim 8, including divider members affixed perpendicularly to the opposite surfaces of the planar member of the separation member for dividing each of the first and second compartments into third and fourth compartments, each divider member having an edge substantially coplanar with the first and second edges, respectively, of the first and second openings, the first and second sealing layers being removably affixed to a respective edge of a divider member.

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18. (Original) The package of claim 17, wherein the first and second sealing layers are perforated or scored along a line corresponding to a respective edge of a divider member.

19. (Original) The package of claim 1, wherein each sealing layer includes a tab attached thereto for gripping and peeling the sealing layers from the respective first and second edges of the container body.

20. (Original) The package of claim 19, wherein the tabs are integrally formed in one piece with its respective sealing layer.

21. (Cancelled).

22. (Currently Amended) A container for packaging two or more brands or types of cigarettes comprising:

a generally rectangularly shaped container body having an internal space for containing the cigarettes, the container body comprising a front body panel, a back body panel, a first side body panel, and a second side body panel and a separation member connected to the body panels and dividing the container body into first and second compartments, each compartment having a perimetrical edge defining first and second openings on opposite sides of the container body;

a plurality of cigarettes of a first brand or type disposed in the first compartment;

a plurality of cigarettes of a second brand or type, different from the first brand or type, disposed in the second compartment;

first and second sealing layers adhesively affixed to a respective perimetrical edge of the first and second compartments to seal the cigarettes in their respective compartments, and wherein the internal space of the container is at a pressure less than atmospheric;

a first lid hingedly attached to the first side body panel of the container body for covering and accessing the first compartment; and

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a second lid hingedly attached to the second side body panel of the container body such that the first and second lids are hingedly attached to the container at substantially diametrically opposed attachment points for covering and accessing the second compartment.

23. (Original) The package of claim 22, wherein the first and second lids, the container body and the separation member are made of materials that have a low permeability.

24. (Cancelled).

25. (Original) The package of claim 22, wherein the first and second lids are hingedly attached to the container body by straps of a flexible sheet material adhesively affixed between the container body and a respective lid.

26. (Original) The package of claim 22, wherein the container body and the separation member are integrally molded in one piece of a polymeric material.

27. (Original) The package of claim 26, wherein the polymeric material is an injection-moldable polymeric material selected from the group consisting of polypropylene, polyethylene terephthalate and polyethylene vinyl alcohol.

28. (Original) The package of claim 22, wherein the separation member comprises a planar member formed integrally with the body panels, the planar member having opposite surfaces each forming a bottom surface of a respective compartment and including a plurality of parallel protrusions formed on the bottom surface of each compartment.

29. (Original) The package of claim 28, wherein the plurality of protrusions comprise one of continuous ridges, interrupted ridges, bell-shaped projections and semi-circular troughs.

30. (Previously Presented) The package of claim 22, wherein the first and second lids each have peripheral flanges with edges and the container body has first

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and second peripheral shoulders on an outer surface thereof such that when the first and second lids are in the closed position, the edges of a respective flange abut a respective first and second peripheral shoulder so as to provide a smooth junction between the lids and the container body.

31. (Original) The package of claim 22, wherein the separation member comprises a horizontal part and a vertical part that bisects at least one of the first and second compartments to form a third compartment for containing cigarettes of different types or brands.

32. (Original) The package of claim 22, wherein the separation member comprises a horizontal part and two vertical parts, each of which bisects a respective one of the first and second compartments to form four compartments for containing cigarettes of different types or brands.

33. (Original) The package of claim 22, wherein the lids are formed of an aluminum material

34. (Original) The package of claim 30, wherein the lids are formed of metal with depending flanges having rolled edges that abut the peripheral shoulders.

35. (Currently Amended) A method of making a cigarette package comprising the steps of:

providing a container body with an internal space comprising first and second side body panels and a separation member disposed between the body panels for dividing the internal space of the container body into first and second compartments, the first compartment having a first opening defined by a first edge of the container body, the second compartment having a second opening defined by a second edge of the container body;

inserting a first plurality of cigarettes into the first compartment;

affixing a sealing layer over the first compartment to seal the first plurality of cigarettes therein, wherein the first and second compartments are at a pressure less than atmospheric;

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inserting a second plurality of cigarettes into the second compartment;
affixing a sealing layer over the second compartment to seal the second plurality of cigarettes therein;

placing first and second lids over the first and second compartments;
attaching a hinge between the first lid and the first side panel of the container body; and

attaching a hinge between the second lid and the second side panel of the container body such that the first and second lids are attached to the container at diametrically opposed attachment points.

36. (Cancelled).

37. (Original) The method of claim 35, wherein the inserting steps are performed substantially simultaneously with one another and the affixing steps are performed substantially simultaneously with one another.

38. (Original) The method of claim 35, wherein the first plurality of cigarettes comprises cigarettes of a first brand or type and the second plurality of cigarettes comprises cigarettes of a second brand or type different than the first brand or type.